

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PC-01 AID-05 SSO-00 HA-05 PM-05  
SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 INRE-00 L-03  
NSCE-00 PA-01 ICAE-00 EB-08 IO-13 SY-05 MCT-01  
DODE-00 H-01 A-01 OPR-02 /090 W  
-----059802 101354Z /42

O 101223Z MAY 78

FM AMEMBASSY KABUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7935

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FOR: DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS TO PEACE CORPS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ASEC, PINT, CASC, AF (SUMSER, JOHN)

SUBJECT: ARREST OF PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER

1. AT APPROXIMATELY 1:45 IN THE AFTERNOON OF MAY 9, JOHN SUMSER, PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER, WAS PLACED IN CUSTODY BY AFGHAN MILITARY AUTHORITIES. HE WAS RELEASED TO EMBASSY OFFICIALS AT APPROXIMATELY 7:45 THAT EVENING. WHAT FOLLOWS HERE IS MR. SUMSER'S STATEMENT OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS ARREST. THE EMBASSY WILL PROVIDE FURTHER DETAILS BY SEPTEL.

2. "I WORK AT THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS TRAINING CENTER AS AN ENGLISH TEACHER. I HAD A FEW MINUTES TO SPARE BEFORE THE U.N. BUS LEFT TO TAKE ME HOME SO I WALKED TO A STORE A SHORT WAY DOWN THE ROAD IN ORDER TO BUY CIGARETTES. MIDWAY BETWEEN THE SCHOOL AND THE STORE, ON THE SAME SIDE OF THE ROAD AS THE SCHOOL, IS A TANK. THE TANK CREW GENERALLY SIT BESIDE THE HIGHWAY ON BENCHES UNDER TREES. THE TANK ITSELF IS IN A FIELD ABOUT 100 YARDS OFF THE ROAD. ON THE WAY BACK FROM THE SHOP I WAS CALLED OVER TO WHERE THE SOLDIERS STOOD. AN OFFICER GRABBED ME BY THE ARM AND DEMANDED TO KNOW WHO I WAS AND WHAT I WAS DOING. I SAID I WAS A TEACHER AND POINTED TO THE SCHOOL. HE PUSHED ME INTO

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ANOTHER OFFICER WHO GRABBED ME ROUGHLY BY THE ARM. THE FIRST OFFICER TOOK A STRIP OF DEVELOPED NEGATIVES OUT OF HIS POCKET AND ASKED ME WHAT IT WAS. I SAID IT WAS FILM, AND HE HIT ME IN THE CHEST. THROUGH THE INTERPRETATION OF ONE OF MY STUDENTS, I FOUND OUT THAT I HAD SUPPOSEDLY BEEN OBSERVED (BY THE SECOND OFFICER) DROPPING THE FILM STRIP IN THE DIRT ACROSS THE STREET, IN FRONT OF A CHAI-HANNA. THE ACHI-HANNA WAS SEARCHED.

THE FIRST OFFICER THEN WENT WITH TWO SOLDIERS TO SEARCH THE SCHOOL. I WAS HELD AT GUN POINT AT THE SPOT WHERE I HAD BEEN APPREHENDED. ACCORDING TO A STUDENT, THE STUDENTS WERE BEING HELD UNDER GUARD IN THE CAFETERIA. I WAS TOLD (BY ONE OF MY GUARDS) THAT MY OFFICE WAS BEING SEARCHED. A FEW TIMES I STRAYED OVER TO THE ROAD HOPING THAT SOMEONE DRIVING BY WOULD SEE ME. EACH TIME I DID SO I WAS TOLD TO MOVE BACK UNDER THE TREES. THIS WENT ON FOR ABOUT 3-1/2 HOURS. THE SOLDIERS, AS OPPOSED TO THE OFFICERS, GUARDING ME WERE NOT UNFRIENDLY.

3. "SOMETIME AROUND 5:00 THE OFFICER WHO HAD BEEN SEARCHING THE SCHOOL CAME BACK. HE WAS WITH A GROUP OF EITHER SOLDIERS OR POLICE WHO HAD JOINED HIM AT THE SCHOOL. I SUPPOSED THAT THE EXTRA MEN HAD HELPED IN THE SEARCH. THE OFFICER HAD SOME PAPERS AND NOTEBOOKS WHICH I IMAGINE CAME FROM THE STUDENTS' DORM. A POLICE JEEP DROVE UP FROM THE AREA AROUND THE TANK (I HADN'T PREVIOUSLY SEEN IT; I'VE NO IDEA WHERE IT CAME FROM). I WAS TOLD TO GET IN AND I DID. THE OFFICER SAT IN FRONT OF ME AND A SOLDIER WITH A RIFLE SAT BESIDE ME. WE DROVE TO THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE.

4. "OUTSIDE THE MINISTRY, THE OFFICER LEFT THE JEEP. HE CAME BACK ABOUT 5 MINUTES LATER WITH A FEW OTHER MEN. ONE OF THEM, A STOCKY MAN IN A GREEN UNIFORM, OPENED MY DOOR. HE SHOWED ME THE FILM STRIP AND ASKED WHAT IT WAS. HE LOOKED VERY VIOLENT. I SAID I HAD NO IDEA WHAT IT WAS. HE HIT ME IN THE CHEST, THEN

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PULLED ME OUT OF THE JEEP. I WALKED, WAS PULLED AND PUSHED, INTO THE BUILDING. IN THE LOBBY, THE STOCKY MAN AGAIN HIT ME. I WAS TAKEN DOWNSTAIRS AND PUT INTO A ROOM. I WAS LEFT ALONE FOR ABOUT A MINUTE.

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FM AMEMBASSY KABUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7936

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5. "PERHAPS A HALF DOZEN PEOPLE THEN CAME INTO THE ROOM. I WAS SITTING ON A SOFA. TWO OF THE MEN WORE BLUE OVERALLS, ONE A GREEN FATIGUE UNIFORM WHICH I DIDN'T RECOGNIZE, THE REST WORE VARIOUS MILITARY UNIFORMS. ONE OF THE MEN IN BLUE WORE A PISTOL AND APPEARED TO BE IN CHARGE. BOTH THE OTHER MAN IN BLUE AND THE MAN IN GREEN FATIGUES SPOKE ENGLISH. I WAS TOLD I WAS A SPY, THAT I HAD BEEN CAUGHT WITH THE PHOTOGRAPHS IN MY POSSESSION, THAT THEY HAD PHOTOS OF ME SKULKING AROUND THE SCHOOL AREA AT 5:00 THE PREVIOUS DAY, THAT THEY KNEW I HAD GIVEN SUBVERSIVE BOOKS TO MY STUDENTS, AND, FINALLY, THAT THEY WERE GOING TO KILL ME IN TWO HOURS. THAT LAST THREAT WAS CONSTANTLY REPEATED WHILE I WAS IN THE MINISTRY. I DENIED IT. I ASKED TO SEE THE PHOTOGRAPHS OF MY SUPPOSED ACTIVITIES AROUND THE SCHOOL ON THE PREVIOUS DAY AND TO SEE THE BOOKS WHICH I HAD SUPPOSEDLY GIVEN TO MY STUDENTS. NEITHER WERE EVER PRODUCED AND BOTH ACCUSATIONS ARE TOTALLY FALSE. I WAS AGAIN HIT AND KNOCKED DOWN BY THE MAN WHO HAD PREVIOUSLY STRUCK ME. I WAS TOLD TO STAND UP, DID SO, AND WAS AGAIN HIT AND KNOCKED DOWN. I WAS TOLD TO TELL THE TRUTH. I WAS TOLD TO TELL THEM FOR WHOM I WORKED, FROM WHOM I HAD RECEIVED THE PHOTOS, AND THE NAMES OF ALL AFGHANS I CAME IN CONTACT WITH. THIS WENT ON FOR QUITE AWHILE, PUNCTUATED BY THE MAN IN BLUE FREQUENTLY SLAPPING HIS PISTOL WHICH WAS IN HIS HOLSTER. I WAS TOLD I COULD BE MADE TO TALK, BUT THAT IN ANY EVENT, I WOULD BE KILLED. A PISTOL WAS COCKED AND HELD TO MY FACE. I COVERED MY EYES AND TOLD CONFIDENTIAL

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THEM THAT IF THEY WERE GOING TO KILL ME THERE WAS NO POINT IN WAITING TWO HOURS. THEY TOLD ME I WAS A VERY WELL TRAINED SPY. I TOLD THEM I WAS TRAINED AS AN ENGLISH TEACHER. THE GUN POINTING AND THE QUESTIONS CONTINUED FOR AWHILE.

6. "THE TANK OFFICER CAME IN WITH SEVERAL OTHER PEOPLE AND WITH THE CONFISCATED MATERIAL FROM T.T.C. THERE WAS A DISCUSSION BORDERING ON AN ARGUMENT. THEY LEFT. THE MAN WITH THE PISTOL LEFT. THE PHYSICAL VIOLENCE STOPPED. I WAS LEFT WITH ONE MAN WHO ASKED ME THE ABOVE QUESTIONS OVER AND OVER AGAIN. I WAS ASKED TO WRITE A REPORT OF ALL MY ACTIVITIES SINCE COMING TO AFGHANISTAN. I WAS CONSTANTLY REMINDED THAT I WAS GOING TO BE KILLED VERY SHORTLY. THIS WENT ON FOR A HALF HOUR OR MORE. THEN THE MAN WITH THE PISTOL RETURNED.

7. "HE SHOOK MY HAND. I WAS TOLD THAT A MINISTER HAD CALLED MY EMBASSY AND THAT I WAS GOING TO BE RELEASED. I NEITHER

BELIEVED NOR DISBELIEVED THEM.

8. "ONCE BACK IN THE LOBBY I WAS ASKED IF I WANTED TO LEAVE IMMEDIATELY, OR IF I WOULD LIKE TO JOIN THEM FOR DINNER. I THOUGHT THIS WAS NOW A DIPLOMATIC AFFAIR AND WOULD ONLY BE DAMAGED BY RUDENESS ON MY PART. SO, I ATE DINNER WITH THE MAN IN BLUE WHO SPOKE ENGLISH. I WAS TOLD THAT HE NOW KNEW THAT I WAS A GOOD FRIEND OF AFGHANISTAN AND HIS BROTHER.

9. "HE SAID A MISTAKE HAD BEEN MADE AND THAT HE WAS SORRY. I SAID THAT MISTAKES IN CONFUSING TIMES WERE UNAVOIDABLE AND THAT I UNDERSTOOD. THEN, I WAS RELEASED TO AMERICAN EMBASSY OFFICIALS.

10. "I FORGOT TO MENTION THAT WHEN I WAS FIRST BROUGHT TO THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE, I WAS TOLD THAT I WAS PART OF A PLOT BY THE OIL-PRODUCING NATIONS TO OVERTHROW THE NEW GOVERNMENT.

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11. "AS WE ATE DINNER, I WAS AGAIN ASKED WHERE I HAD GOTTEN THE FILM STRIP. SIGNED JOHN R. SUMSER, PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER".

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## Message Attributes

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